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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the impact of international and national influences on curriculum reform. The reforms were first manifested in the proceedings of the Forum on National Statements and Profiles in Australian Schools and arose from the work undertaken in the states and territories to implement and review curricula based on the national statements and profiles. By presenting accounts of developments in each of the states and territories between 1996 and 1999, the report examines the significance of external influences on shaping state-level policymaking in curriculum reform. The article details the New South Wales Board of Studies; the Victoria Board of Studies; the Queensland school curriculum since the 1950s; and school-reform movements in South Australia, Western Australia, Tasmania, Australian Capital Territory, and Northern Territory. The reforms in five of the territories employed two processes: curriculum frameworks, where several groups worked in coordination, and course-based syllabuses, which involved a more disjointed process of developing syllabuses in rounds or independently. In both types, the processes of consulting the educational community through field reviews appeared to be more extensive than had occurred previously. The paper's conclusion focuses on new influences on curriculum reform and offers comments on those aspects that have been adopted and rejected. (Contains 22 references.) (RJM)

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Abstract

This article examines the impact of international and national influences in curriculum reform, first manifested in the proceedings of the Forum on National Statements and Profiles in Australian Schools, on the work undertaken in the states and territories to implement and review curricula based on the national statements and profiles. By presenting accounts of developments in each of the states and territories between 1996 and 1999, this article examines the significance of external influences on shaping state-level policy-making in curriculum reform. The article concludes by assessing the importance of various factors on the pattern of state-level curriculum reform.

Introduction

At its meeting in July 1996, the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) endorsed an offer made in December 1995 by the New South Wales Minister for Education and Training, John Aquilina, to convene a national forum to discuss issues in Australian education relating to national curriculum collaboration. Representing stakeholders, a National Forum Planning Committee organised the forum and prepared a report for MCEETYA, subsequently included in the proceedings of the forum published by the New South Wales Department of Training and Education Coordination (1997). Held at Sydney during October 1996, the Forum on National Statements and Profiles in Australian Schools brought together 190 delegates, who participated in presentations on outcomes-based education and situating Australian developments

within the international context, a panel discussion on developments in the states and territories, and workshops focusing on the impact of the national statements and profiles on teaching and learning, outcomes and accountability, and the future of national curriculum collaboration.

Afterwards, the National Forum Planning Committee identified five key issues emerging from the forum. Support from the delegates for continuing commitment to national collaboration led the Committee to recommend that MCEETYA reconfirm its commitment to national goals, and that the ongoing process of national collaboration involve all stakeholders and adopt realistic timelines. Support for a review of the Common and Agreed National Goals for Schooling in Australia led to a recommendation that MCEETYA should examine whether they reflect current and future educational expectations. Support for applying outcomes-based education approaches led to a recommendation that the Curriculum Corporation should provide advice to MCEETYA on ways to promote best practice in outcomes-based education. The Committee also recommended that MCEETYA should note the views of delegates about the need for professional development to support curriculum change. Support for consultation on benchmarking led to a recommendation that MCEETYA should ratify the establishment of a taskforce to consider the principles for benchmarking adopted by the forum.

The recommendations of the forum anticipated two important national initiatives. Having agreed at its fifth meeting in July 1996 to add a new national goal on numeracy and English literacy, MCEETYA initiated a review of the Common and Agreed National Goals for Schooling in Australia in March 1997. In response to the outcome of a six-month public review of a revised draft released in May 1998, MCEETYA adopted a new set of National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century in April 1999. In July 1996, MCEETYA agreed to develop national frameworks for reporting achievement in literacy and numeracy with benchmarks at years 3, 5, 7 and 9, and appointed the Benchmarking Taskforce to oversee work by the Curriculum Corporation on developing the national benchmarks by involving experts in literacy and numeracy. In April 1998, MCEETYA approved the literacy benchmarks for writing, spelling and reading at years 3 and 5, whilst work continued on developing and trialing literacy benchmarks for speaking, listening and

viewing, as well as numeracy benchmarks.

In spite of the attention given by state-level administrators to curriculum developments in the states and territories, the forum failed to address many of the issues surrounding the development and implementation of state-level curricula based on the national statements and profiles. The purpose of this article is to determine the extent to which national policy initiatives, together with more benign international influences, affected state-level policy-makers and curriculum developers involved in reviewing curricula during this period. In a previous article (Watt, 1998), the author argued that antecedent conditions for curriculum development in the states and territories influenced the process of implementing the national statements and profiles between 1993 and 1996. Whilst it is undeniable that antecedent conditions continue to form the foundations for state-level curriculum reforms, it is apparent from the following accounts that various external influences have become more significant in shaping these reforms during the period from 1996 to 1999.

Methodology

Using the earlier article as a foundation, the author searched websites on the Internet and electronic databases to identify relevant information and documents. Information obtained from these secondary sources was verified for accuracy through correspondence and meetings with officials in state and territory education and accreditation agencies. In many cases, these officials provided information, reviewed and edited extracts from the article on different occasions.

Implementation Process in the States and Territories

New South Wales

Established in June 1990 by the Education Reform Act, the New South Wales Board of Studies issued advice to schools in July 1991 on two types of syllabuses: primary and secondary syllabuses

developed by syllabus advisory committees and implemented after advice from key learning area coordinating committees; and secondary syllabuses developed by schools, which were endorsed at that time for a three-year period by one of ten regional endorsement panels, but more recently for a four-year period by the Board Endorsement Panel. In 1991, syllabus advisory committees began developing new syllabuses, incorporating outcomes and pointers, which were supplemented by support documents, consisting of sample modules or units of work, recommended teaching strategies, and annotated student work samples, prepared to assist teachers implement each syllabus.

In May 1995, the newly elected Labor government initiated the Review of Outcomes and Profiles (New South Wales Department of Training and Education Coordination, 1995), which recommended that the link between the national profiles and the syllabuses should be broken by replacing levels and pointers with outcomes based on five stages ranging from kindergarten to year 10, syllabuses for kindergarten to year 6 should be implemented by employing a cycle commencing in 1997, and syllabuses for years 7 to 10 should be developed over realistic time-frames. In 1996, the Board of Studies released a position paper presenting a model for developing syllabuses and support documents, proposing that syllabuses should be organised by strands, which specify outcomes and indicators structured into six stages: primary syllabuses covering stages 1 to 3; School Certificate syllabuses covering stages 4 and 5; and Higher School Certificate syllabuses covering stage 6.

The approval of revised syllabuses after protracted delays for stages 1 to 3 - English in March 1998, Human Society and its Environment in October 1998, and Personal Development, Health and Physical Education in August 1999 - and for stages 4 and 5 - 9 to 10 Mathematics in August 1996, 7 to 10 History and Geography in November 1998, and 7 to 10 Science in December 1998 - elicited defensive as well as critical commentaries. In referring to the development and implementation of the primary English syllabus published in 1994, Gibbs (1998) argued that the delay resulted from stakeholders needing to compromise over subject-specific ideological stances, consultative and implementation processes being compromised by political interference, the varying needs for teachers' professional development required for implementation, and inaccurate reporting of

controversial issues by the news media. In order to overcome such shortcomings, the Board of Studies approved a new process in August 1998 for developing or revising syllabuses, which involved a sequence of steps. At its commencement, the Board of Studies appoints a Board Curriculum Committee, which conducts research and consultation to identify issues pertinent to preparing a writing brief. Then a Project Team is appointed to develop the syllabus and support documents through consultation within the educational community. Approval of the syllabus by the Minister is followed by its production and dissemination to schools. A final stage of verification of the syllabus in use is intended to assist in its eventual revision.

The development of syllabuses for stage 6, however, was affected by the Review of the Higher School Certificate, beginning with the publication of a discussion paper, in which McGaw (1996) examined the developmental history of the Higher School Certificate as a means to identifying curriculum, assessment and reporting, and post-secondary selection options. In a report on 38 public hearings and the analysis of more than 1,000 submissions arising from the public review of the discussion paper, McGaw (1997) presented 26 recommendations, each supported by a proposal and schedule for action related to curriculum, assessment and reporting, and selection for post-secondary destinations. In accepting the major directions proposed in this report, Aquilina (1997) presented the state government's reforms to the Higher School Certificate. In the area of the curriculum, the government adopted a set of criteria for approving syllabuses, abandoned the use of the key learning area structure, adopted a single performance scale for assessing across courses in the same subject, recommended investigation of the two-unit model for courses, proposed development of new English syllabuses, incorporated principles for vocational education and training into the Higher School Certificate, adopted more flexible study requirements for the Higher School Certificate, and accepted a common date for commencing the Higher School Certificate program at the beginning of year 11. In the area of assessment and reporting, the government accepted a range of strategies to improve assessment practices, adopted a standards-referenced approach to assessment, and approved a new form for reporting student results. In the area of post-secondary destinations, the government adopted new procedures to guarantee confidentiality in the selection process for university admission. In order to enhance the School Certificate, the government introduced a

statewide testing program in the core areas at the end of year 10. The paper supported a schedule for introducing the arrangements for the new Higher School Certificate for year 11 students commencing in 2000. As a consequence, the government enacted the Reform Further Amendment Act in 1999, which legislated for the introduction of the new courses for stage 6, and statewide tests for the School Certificate.

The more flexible curriculum structure of two-unit courses for stage 6, approved in August 1998, allowed students to choose between in-depth, specialised study programs and broader patterns of study. In order to redesign the new structure, the Board of Studies appointed a project team to evaluate the extent to which each Board-developed syllabus needed to be revised. The draft reports were then presented for consultation across the educational community before the final reports were produced and presented to the Board of Studies in June 1998. The recommendations of the evaluation reports were used to develop draft writing briefs, a task commenced in August 1998. Following consultation across the educational community, each writing brief was revised and approved as the basis for syllabus development. The syllabuses were then developed and presented for consultation in the educational community between February and April of 1999, prior to final revision on the basis of responses. Following approval by the Minister in April or May of 1999, the new syllabuses were published and distributed to schools in July 1999. Subsequently, a team of trained facilitators led workshops held in schools across New South Wales to familiarise teachers with the new syllabuses.

Victoria

In July 1993, the Minister for Education, Donald Hayward, directed the Victoria Board of Studies to review the extent to which the national statements and profiles provided an appropriate curriculum framework. The review led the Board of Studies to recommend that the eight key learning areas of the national statements and profiles would provide an adequate basis for developing a Curriculum and Standards Framework to replace the School Curriculum and Organisation Framework published in 1988. Eight key learning area committees, formed in

November 1993, developed the draft framework, which was distributed for a statewide review resulting in more than 5,000 responses. Following revision, the Curriculum and Standards Framework was approved by the Minister in November 1994 before being released in February 1995 to form a key component of the systemic reform initiative, Schools of the Future (Caldwell and Hayward, 1998).

Subsequent review and revision of the curriculum for Victorian schools has involved two initiatives. First, a review of the Victorian Certificate of Education, intended to address a range of emerging needs and issues, whilst acknowledging and maintaining its best features, was initiated in February 1997 by the Minister for Education, Phillip Gude. Overseeing the review process, a nine-member Committee of Review solicited more than 400 written submissions, consulted more than 90 organisations and groups, visited a representative sample of schools, contracted a professional marketing company to conduct focus group meetings and a public phone-in and a research centre to conduct telephone interviews with 200 parents and 400 students. In its report, the Committee of Review on the Victorian Certificate of Education (1997) presented 34 recommendations addressing the structure of the Victorian Certificate of Education, curriculum, assessment and reporting, accreditation and benchmarking, and information technology. The report recommended that the Victorian Certificate of Education should be modified to accommodate the needs of a more diverse student population, should reflect the enhanced role for vocational education and training programs in schools, and the calculation of the tertiary entrance rank should be modified to reflect these changes. Building on the Curriculum and Standards Framework, the curriculum for years 11 and 12 should be based on a set of adopted principles, and encompass studies developed by either the Board of Studies, or industry to be endorsed by the Board of Studies. Standards-based learning outcomes should be developed, and competency standards should be applied to vocational education and training programs within the context of a mixed system of external examinations and school-based assessments moderated by an external reference test. Guidelines for accrediting courses should be revised to reflect the review's recommendations, and should accommodate the appointment of expert panels for benchmarking new courses against national and international standards. A three-year strategic plan should be developed to apply information technology to deliver the Victorian

Certificate of Education more efficiently. Following the Minister's announcement of the review's outcomes in December 1997, the Board of Studies appointed expert studies panels in February 1998, which reviewed the studies intended for implementation in 2000, presenting their reports in June 1998. After revision of the accreditation guidelines in April 1998, the Board of Studies released the schedule of studies to proceed to accreditation in May 1998. Commencing in July 1998, accreditation panels accredited 24 studies intended for implementation in 2000 over a six-month period.

Second, a review of the Curriculum and Standards Framework, especially with regard to reducing its content by paying attention to curriculum quality and coherence, international best practice in benchmarking, the importance of information technologies, research on teaching and learning, community expectations, and the structure of reporting, was initiated in May 1998 by the Minister for Education. The fourteen-member CSF 2000 Advisory Committee, appointed to oversee the eighteen-month review, consulted principals, school councils, employers, professional associations, teachers, and academics. Advice received from these groups was incorporated into a directions paper, which was disseminated in August 1998 to form the basis for forums with 1,200 principals held at 21 venues across Victoria during August and September of 1998. Respondents indicated that they supported retaining the eight key learning areas, but questioned the need for so many strands, particularly in the early years. They also supported highlighting essential learning, linking the strands and essential learning to core curriculum areas and levels of schooling, and the need for clearer outcome statements. On the basis of the responses, CSF Key Learning Area Committees, consisting of teacher majorities representing all sectors and levels, revised each of the eight key learning areas over a six-month period commencing in October 1998. In April 1999, copies of the draft revised Curriculum and Standards Framework, together with an information kit explaining the consultation process and a questionnaire administered in computer disk format, were distributed to schools and on the Internet for a field review, which included case studies documenting how five schools implemented the original Curriculum and Standards Framework, meetings with key organisations, an invitational symposium on setting standards held in June 1999, and a review by a panel of curriculum and educational measurement experts. Over 700 responses to the questionnaire survey, received from all sectors of education across Victoria, were overwhelmingly positive about

the draft revised Curriculum and Standards Framework. Published on a CD-ROM and in print format by the Victoria Board of Studies (2000), the revised Curriculum and Standards Framework consists of component frameworks for the eight key learning areas, together with a companion document for English as a Second Language. Each component framework is organised into strands, which specify learning outcomes and indicators. The learning outcomes and indicators are organised into six levels, broadly covering the preparatory, 1 to 2, 3 to 4, 5 to 6, 7 to 8, and 9 to 10 years of schooling.

Following the release of the draft revised Curriculum and Standards Framework, curriculum specialists from the Victoria Department of Education compared the learning outcomes with the outcomes in the original Curriculum and Standards Framework to identify which units in the Course Advice documents needed to be revised or replaced. Approximately fifty writers, contracted in June 1999, completed revisions to the Course Advice documents in November 1999. Containing suggested learning activities, curriculum resources, and assessment techniques linked to the revised Curriculum and Standards Framework by outcome codes, the Course Advice documents were developed for each of the key learning areas and English as a Second Language, and published on a CD-ROM.

Queensland

In November 1992, the newly elected Labor government appointed a four-member panel to conduct the first review of the Queensland school curriculum since the 1950s. In its final report, the Review of the Queensland School Curriculum (1994) recommended that the structures for managing the curriculum should be changed, and development of new syllabuses should be based on the national statements and profiles. In order to oversee the curriculum reform, the state government established the Queensland Curriculum Council in November 1994 to devise a strategic plan, and the Queensland School Curriculum Office to coordinate development, implementation and monitoring of new syllabuses and assessment procedures for preschool to year 10, whilst the Queensland Board of Senior Secondary School Studies continued to be responsible for curriculum

development for years 11 and 12. Although the Queensland Curriculum Council first met in May 1995, and the Queensland School Curriculum Office began operations a month later, Robert Quinn, the Minister for Education in the newly elected National and Liberal coalition government, introduced legislation enacted in December 1996, which merged these two bodies to form the Queensland School Curriculum Council, to ensure that curriculum development, strategic planning and quality assurance would be undertaken by an independent agency.

Since syllabuses for Mathematics and English had been published in 1987 and 1994, the main activity of the Queensland School Curriculum Council involved developing new syllabuses for the remaining six key learning areas. The new syllabuses, which are organised into strands, specify core and discretionary learning outcomes across six levels, covering the preschool to 1, 2 to 3, 4 to 5, 6 to 7, 8 to 9, and 10 years of schooling. A process, adopted for developing each syllabus over a three-year time-frame, consists of a sequence of steps. At its commencement, the Queensland School Curriculum Council appoints a project team and a syllabus advisory committee to initiate the development of each syllabus. The Project Team prepares a design brief, which forms the basis for developing the syllabus draft over the first year of the project. Each syllabus draft, which is trialed in selected schools, is revised following an external evaluation of the trial. Sourcebooks, consisting of modules providing the basis for planning units of work, are prepared to assist teachers implement each syllabus.

Curriculum development commenced in 1996 with the production in January 1998 of preschool curriculum guidelines intended to provide a framework for teachers to develop, implement and evaluate an effective preschool program. The preparation of a curriculum development handbook in 1996 determined the need for a detailed statement on the nature and philosophy of the school curriculum, which led in 1997 to the commencement of a P to 10 curriculum framework project developed in stages within a consultative network through a series of forums. In 1996, development of a second round of syllabuses for Science, and Health and Physical Education commenced. Trialing of the draft syllabuses in schools over a one-year period beginning in July 1997, included initial and mid-term conferences for participating teachers in May 1997 and February 1998, followed by

evaluation conferences held in June 1998. Following consultations within the educational community, the drafts were revised and the syllabuses were published in 1999. The third round of developing syllabuses for Studies of Society and the Environment, and Languages other than English commenced in 1997. Several draft versions for the Studies of Society and the Environment syllabus were synthesised into a single draft, which was revised in September 1998 before being trialed in May 1999, presented for a final consultation, revised and published in January 2000. A draft syllabus for Languages other than English in years 4 to 10, released for trials in August 1998, and draft curriculum guidelines for years 1 to 3, were published in January 2000. The fourth round of developing syllabuses for Technology, and the Arts commenced in 1998. A draft Arts syllabus, released in February 1999, and a draft Technology syllabus, released in May 1999, were trialed in schools during 1999.

South Australia

In September 1993, the Department of Education, Employment and Training recommended that public schools in South Australia should transfer to implementing the national statements and profiles over a three-year period beginning in 1994. The Liberal government, elected later in 1993, appointed review reference groups, which reported in May 1995 that the national statements and profiles would form appropriate documents for use in South Australian schools. In 1994, a cross-divisional working group consulted the educational community to develop a Curriculum Statements and Profiles Implementation Support Plan for phasing implementation of the national statements and profiles between 1995 and 1997.

Implementation of the national statements and profiles was undertaken by a Teaching and Learning Team, consisting of twelve to sixteen curriculum specialists, who developed professional development packages for the key learning areas, provided familiarisation with the national statements and profiles, integrated curriculum, assessment and reporting policies, and used student achievement information for curriculum review and reform. The Materials Development Team assisted by developing specific curriculum materials to support the implementation process in each

learning area. In 1997, schools requested more flexible professional development, which led the Teaching and Learning Team to introduce an investigative model in 1998 to assist each school to explore, reflect on, and change its practice in areas that the school had identified as curriculum priorities. The Teaching and Learning Team offered workshops on these topics at twenty venues across South Australia.

Following a process of public review, the South Australia Department of Education and Children's Services (1997) published a declaration affirming the agency's fundamental purpose by establishing five strategic directions: developing the individual and society; achieving unity through diversity; strengthening community; creating a spirit of enterprise; and becoming global citizens. This declaration forms the basis for planning by the Department, school councils, management committees, and the educational community until 2010. In order to reflect the philosophical and educational parameters articulated in the declaration, a discussion paper was released for consultation to determine the design and format of a curriculum statement. Following conclusion of the review in July 1998, the responses were collated by a committee, which passed on recommendations to a group of writers, who revised the statement presented in the discussion paper (South Australia Department of Education, Training and Employment, 1998).

After the establishment of Partnerships 21, a project intended to foster devolution of decision-making responsibilities to local school communities, the Department initiated a project to align the rationale presented in the curriculum statement with the new policy on school management to establish the South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability Framework, consisting of sections covering scope, standards and accountability. The scope will consist of three component frameworks covering four bands: birth to 3 years of age, the first stage of the early years band; six learning areas from 3 years of age to reception, the second stage of the early years band; and eight learning areas from reception to year 12 covering the third stage of the early years together with the primary, middle and senior years bands. Each component framework will organise essential learnings into strands, which specify curriculum standards organised according to six levels. The accountability section will outline the assessment and reporting policy for each sector.

A ten-member Steering Committee, supported by four curriculum band reference groups and twenty experts working groups, was appointed to oversee its development. In May 1999, more than 1,000 teachers, participating in workshops and teleconferences at 28 sites across South Australia, were consulted about existing curriculum frameworks used in South Australia in order to provide an information base to develop the new framework. A consultant, who analysed the responses from these groups, reported that the findings affirmed the directions identified for the new framework. In August 1999, Malcolm Buckby, the Minister for Education, Children's Services and Training, appointed the writing team, a consortium of 37 educators from the University of South Australia and the Council for Educational Associations of South Australia, which produced a preliminary draft framework in November 1999. Involving the collection of responses from educators by a questionnaire, interviews and focus group sessions with the curriculum band reference groups and experts working groups, a consultation contracted to the Erebus Consulting Group, led to the analysis of responses to provide directions for the writing team in preparing the trialing draft. Distributed in February 2000 to 72 public and 12 Catholic schools for trialing, this draft will also be reviewed by the educational community through interviews, focus group meetings and a questionnaire survey. Following completion of the trials in May 2000, the responses will be used by the writing team to develop the final draft to be presented to the heads of the three sector agencies for approval in December 2000. Beginning in July 2000, it is proposed that teaching guides and professional development services will be designed through contracts, thereby supporting implementation of the South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability Framework in 2001.

Western Australia

In June 1994, the Minister for Education, Norman Moore, appointed the Ministerial Committee to Review Curriculum Development to review current processes for curriculum development, explore future options, and evaluate the financial implications and accountability of its recommendations. Consisting of a two-stage process, the review involved evaluating existing curriculum provisions and deriving a set of recommendations, and then preparing an organisational model and

implementation plan. Published by the Western Australia Ministerial Committee to Review Curriculum Development (1995), the report recommended that a Curriculum Council should be formed to develop a statewide curriculum framework for kindergarten to year 12.

Appointed by an Interim Curriculum Council formed in June 1996, learning area committees developed a draft Curriculum Framework in collaboration with a Values Consultative Committee, a Working Party with Expertise on Inclusivity, and community reference groups. The draft Curriculum Framework was distributed to all Western Australian teachers and many interest groups in July 1997 for a six-month review involving a series of public meetings, focus group sessions and a student forum. A survey, which involved administering a questionnaire in both short and long forms, identified from more than 1,800 responses that, whilst the respondents agreed the Curriculum Framework would enable more effective curriculum planning, there were features some respondents wished to be changed, and its implementation would require extensive professional development. Overarching statement and learning area statement review groups recommended changes based on responses to the review to the Curriculum Framework Committee, which revised the Curriculum Framework over a six-month period.

Published by the Curriculum Council of Western Australia (1998), the Curriculum Framework consists of an overarching statement and learning area statements for each of the eight learning areas. The overarching statement outlines seven key principles and thirteen overarching learning outcomes to which all learning areas contribute. A further 66 learning outcomes are specified in the learning area statements: four in the Arts; nine in English; five in Health and Physical Education; six in Languages other than English; nineteen in Mathematics; nine in Science; seven in Society and the Environment; and seven in Technology and Enterprise. In addition, the overarching statement and each learning area statement include three sections, the first covering the scope of the curriculum across the early childhood, middle childhood, early adolescence, and late adolescence young adulthood phases of development, the second covering the principles guiding learning, teaching and assessment, and the third covering links across the curriculum.

The Curriculum Framework was distributed to schools in July 1998 for implementation over a five-year period from 1999. The Education Department of Western Australia, the Catholic Education Office of Western Australia and the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia collaborated to produce a set of guidelines for professional development, based on teachers gaining an understanding of the purpose and nature of the Curriculum Framework, developing shared understandings of the outcomes, and specific knowledge and understandings of the Curriculum Framework. School systems were advised to establish their own strategic plans that identify the types of professional development and the sequence for achieving this over the five-year implementation phase. A set of principles and a four-phase model for delivery and accountability that took into account the different entry points in teachers' understandings of outcomes-focused learning and integrating values across the curriculum, as well as differing modes for professional development, was adopted by the Curriculum Council of Western Australia. In order to support the implementation of the Curriculum Framework, the Curriculum Council of Western Australia released three sets of professional materials: the first, a guide for a whole-school approach to implementing the Curriculum Framework; a series of nine books, each one presenting case studies focusing on teachers' experiences in a learning area or across the curriculum; and the last a bibliography of resources.

In 1990, the Western Australia Ministry of Education began developing student outcome statements closely matching the eight national profiles, which were trialed in two phases. The first in 1992 involved 120 schools exploring their use, and providing data to assess their validity and reliability in English and Mathematics. Conducted in 88 schools across Western Australia in 1994 and 1995, the second examined their use in addressing issues of teaching, assessing student performance, and planning school development across different levels and types of schools. The second trial led to student outcome statements reference groups refining the student outcome statements to ensure their congruence with the Curriculum Framework. The Education Department of Western Australia (1998) published an Outcomes and Standards Framework presenting the student outcome statements organised into each of the eight learning areas by strands and substrands according to eight levels and a foundation outcome statement for students with

intellectual disabilities. The framework for each learning area is preceded by a chart cross-referencing the learning outcomes in the Curriculum Framework with the strand descriptors for the student outcome statements in the Outcomes and Standards Framework. Teachers in public schools are expected to use the Outcomes and Standards Framework to inform planning of educational programs, and to assess and report on student progress in achieving the learning outcomes described in the Curriculum Framework.

With the commencement of implementation of the Curriculum Framework, it was necessary to determine if the existing system of post-compulsory education was compatible with its intentions. Consequently, the Curriculum Council of Western Australia held a seminar in May 1998 at which representatives from interest groups identified a range of constraints affecting curriculum provision at the post-compulsory level. In August 1998, the Curriculum Council of Western Australia appointed the Vision Implementation Working Group, which determined the directions for the Post-Compulsory Review. In consultation with a Community Reference Group, a Student Reference Group and several focus groups, the Vision Implementation Working Group examined the extent to which post-compulsory courses could be aligned to the outcomes in the Curriculum Framework, developed four scenarios ranging from the current model, moderate, increasing to most change for integrating post-compulsory courses with the Curriculum Framework, and released a discussion paper, which identified that the curriculum should be consistent with the outcomes focus of the Curriculum Framework, breadth and depth of learning should be maximised, standards should be more transparent and explicit, assessment practices should be valid, fair, educative, explicit and comprehensive, certification should reflect standards of quality, integrity, credibility and applicability, and a wider variety of selection methods for post-school destinations should be used (Curriculum Council of Western Australia, 1999). As part of the review, three concepts were developed to illustrate different degrees of change ranging from adapting the existing system to an outcomes approach, designing a new curriculum structure around an outcomes approach, to placing responsibility on schools to design curriculum around an outcomes approach. Following a six-month review involving the conduct of seminars for schools, professional associations, parents and the public, and the collection of responses by a questionnaire, the agreed direction, determined by

taking account of the responses to the review and consultation with stakeholders, will be defined in a report to be presented to the Minister in August 2000. After approval of the agreed direction, a brief will be developed for designing the new courses in 2001 prior to their implementation in 2004.

Tasmania

At the time the national statements and profiles were disseminated, policy statements presenting four key reference points for curriculum planning in Tasmanian schools and providing direction to teachers to incorporate the national statements and profiles through continuing reviews, and a professional material, used to provide inservice training in schools across Tasmania, were released. Guidelines for years K to 8 in each of the learning areas were prepared and published during 1995 and 1996. A cycle was determined for the implementation period concluding in 2000, and particular learning areas were identified as priorities: Studies of Society and the Environment between 1995 and 1997; English between 1996 and 1998; the Arts between 1997 and 1999; and Health and Physical Education between 1998 and 2000. Languages other than English was a priority learning area throughout the implementation period. Each learning area received specific support from a team of curriculum implementation officers, who were drawn from the six districts. Schools were required to review, develop and implement their educational programs according to this cycle. The cycle also determined the allocation of resources to support each priority learning area, which led to state-level initiatives occurring in each priority learning area. A website incorporating curriculum guidelines and resources was developed for English. An emphasis was placed on the professional development of teachers in the Arts. A strategic plan was developed for gradual introduction of Languages other than English, especially French, German, Indonesian and Japanese into primary schools between 1996 and 2003, followed by high schools between 2000 and 2007.

More substantial curriculum development activities occurred in the other two learning areas. When Studies of Society and the Environment was a priority area, a key teacher program led to the creation of a network of teacher experts in schools across Tasmania. During 1996 and 1997, these teachers worked with the curriculum implementation team to produce a collection of products

developed by schools. Beginning in 1997, the curriculum implementation team, which worked with curriculum specialists and groups of teachers, used the guidelines published in 1996 as a basis for developing a curriculum guide, published by the Tasmania Department of Education (1998), which specified content organisers, teaching and learning approaches, models for school improvement and professional development, strategies for classroom planning and units of work, assessment techniques and reporting forms, and lists of curriculum resources.

The report of an evaluation of the health education program recommended that a curriculum framework, consistent with the national statement and profile, should be developed (Tasmania Department of Education, Community and Cultural Development, 1996). Its development began in 1996 with a consultation process involving representatives from more than 70 organisations formulating key messages for healthy living. This information was used by the Health and Physical Education Curriculum Development Team to develop a number of main ideas and key intentions in consultation with teachers during a series of district meetings. Published by the Tasmania Department of Education, Community and Cultural Development (1998), the curriculum framework organises outcomes and indicators by main ideas, linked to key intended literacy and numeracy outcomes derived from the national profiles. Since the curriculum framework is intended to provide a starting-point, teachers may include additional teaching and learning examples, resources and links. At the same time, the Department of Education, Community and Cultural Development collaborated with the Department of Community and Health Services to develop a school improvement strategy, *Health Promoting Schools*. Although implementation of the curriculum framework and the school improvement strategy formed the main thrust for Health and Physical Education as a priority area, a professional material, *Fundamental Motor Skills*, was developed to provide advice to K to 4 teachers on when introduction and proficiency in specific skills should occur.

Australian Capital Territory

Beginning in 1984, the Australian Capital Territory Schools Authority developed curriculum

frameworks for preschool to year 12 in eight learning areas, following initiation of a five-year plan for curriculum review and renewal. After a decision was made in 1990 to align the ACT Curriculum Frameworks with the national statements, working parties of teachers merged these frameworks, a process which was completed in December 1993 following a system-wide consultation. In addition, ACT Course Frameworks, which provide the means for developing courses for years 11 and 12, were developed by the Australian Capital Territory Board of Senior Secondary Studies.

The Australian Capital Territory Department of Education and Training consulted teachers to identify perspectives they addressed in classrooms that were not included in the ACT Curriculum Frameworks. Following identification of nine cross-curricular perspectives, groups of curriculum specialists and teachers developed support papers on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education, Australian education, environment education, gender equity, information access, language for understanding, multicultural education, special needs education, and work education. Published in 1997, each support paper presented suggestions on teaching and learning strategies, selection of content, implementation in the key learning areas, assessment, reporting and evaluation strategies, and lists of professional references. The support papers are intended to be used to incorporate cross-curricular perspectives in each of the key learning areas of course documents developed by schools.

Northern Territory

In 1992, the Northern Territory Board of Studies completed a series of reviews covering the curriculum, assessment and certification by releasing a Common Curriculum Statement, which organised the curriculum into eleven subject areas, and a Common Assessment Framework, which incorporated both school-based assessment and a system-wide testing program. In 1993, the Northern Territory Department of Education implemented the common curriculum, providing English, Health and Physical Education, Languages other than English, Mathematics, Performing and Visual Arts, Science, and Social Education for the transition to year 10, together with Business Education, Career Education, Home Economics, and Technical Studies for years 8 to 10. Also in 1993,

the Board of Studies began examining ways of aligning the Common Curriculum Statement with the national statements, and its system-wide testing program with the national profiles.

The outcome of a pilot project to trial the national profiles for English and Mathematics in 1995 led to the development in 1997 of the Northern Territory Outcomes Profiles, based on only one outcome for each level across each strand. Implementation of the Northern Territory Outcomes Profiles in 1998 led the Board of Studies to publish the Common Assessment and Reporting Statement, providing a framework for schools to plan, develop and implement their own policies in relation to assessing and reporting student achievement. Also in 1998, the Board of Studies revised the Common Curriculum Statement to reflect the adoption of the nationally defined learning areas, and to provide a framework for schools to implement the common curriculum in terms of balance among the learning areas and cross-curricular perspectives. Early in 1999, the Board of Studies published a Learning Area Statement for each of the eight learning areas, which described the content and essential outcomes of the common curriculum from transition to year 10.

As an outcome of a review of education in the Northern Territory initiated in September 1998 by Peter Adamson, the Minister for Education and Training, a task group, appointed to redesign curriculum functions, reviewed curriculum documents, conducted interviews, convened a workshop for teachers and collected written submissions during March 1999. As a consequence of the review, the Northern Territory Department of Education (1999) published a discussion paper presenting 84 recommendations intended to identify the core functions of the Board of Studies and the Department's Curriculum Services Branch, and proposing that the Board of Studies should develop a curriculum framework to replace the Common Curriculum Statement, the Common Assessment and Reporting Statement, and the learning area statements. Following a month-long public review in August 1999, responses to the discussion paper were considered before the recommendations were endorsed by the Minister. A Curriculum Framework Team was formed in December 1999 to develop, field-test and implement the new curriculum framework.

Conclusion

Although this review shows that all the Australian states and territories, except Tasmania, are developing, implementing or revising curriculum frameworks or syllabuses along predictable courses, it is apparent that new influences, partly emanating from overseas, have had a profound impact. The conclusion to this article concentrates on identifying these influences, and commenting on those aspects relating to the processes of development, implementation and revision, the nature of the standards, and the quality of the products.

In the five states and territories, which have reached the stages of implementation or revision, curriculum frameworks developed in Victoria, Western Australia and the Australian Capital Territory, involved several groups working in coordination, whilst syllabuses, developed in New South Wales and Queensland, employed a more disjointed process of developing them in rounds. In both processes, however, consultations within the educational community appeared to be more extensive than had occurred previously, although efforts to involve the public were limited. Whilst development of a curriculum framework is proceeding in South Australia, and a curriculum framework has been proposed for the Northern Territory, the development of curriculum guides for only two learning areas in Tasmania, now appears to be inadequate in terms of the systematic curriculum reforms occurring elsewhere in Australia and overseas.

The refinement of outcomes, represented by the definition of indicators in Victoria's revised Curriculum and Standards Framework and in New South Wales' syllabuses, and of curriculum standards in the South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability Framework, signified not only the adoption of an approach to setting standards that is consistent with national benchmarking, but also a shift towards the sort of standards-based education characteristic of current developments in the United States. The controversy surrounding outcomes-based education in the United States during the early 1990s, a result of attacks by conservative Christian groups over its emphasis on the teaching of values, the presentation of radical social, political and economic values, the promotion of a whole language approach in reading, multicultural education,

and the approach adopted by educators in its implementation stifled most state-level outcomes-based education reforms. The redefinition in the United States of those principles of outcomes-based education associated with cognition as standards-based education, a distinction delineated by Ravitch (1995), appears to be influencing curriculum developers in the Australian states and territories to define content and performance standards as important elements of the outcomes specified in curriculum frameworks and syllabuses.

However, it is more difficult to reach sound judgments about the quality of the standards defined in the outcomes expressed in curriculum documents developed by the Australian states and territories, because criteria have not been established to make valid and reliable judgments relevant to the Australian context, let alone applied independently in the way such work has been conducted in the United States by the American Federation of Teachers and the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation. The findings of such independent evaluations are likely to be important for identifying strengths and weaknesses in the quality of standards, essential information if states and territories are to undertake effective reviews and revisions, as well as provide strong foundations for aligning assessment procedures, incentive systems for students to meet such standards, and remediation programs for low-performing students. Such evaluations could also form the basis for refocusing the directions for curriculum reforms by overcoming previous shortcomings, allowing for the creation of new national statements and profiles, and using the best state-level standards as models for other states and territories.

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